

THE HOLOCAUST IN THE EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT: CHALLENGES AND APPROACHES¹

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Abstract

Within the framework of literary and translation studies, this article is aimed at examining the issue of Holocaust education, which has progressively become a site of negotiation in the fields of Holocaust, cultural and pedagogical studies. Starting with a brief overview of the evolution of Holocaust representation in the last decades and focusing on the context of high education, this article is organised in three sections which deal with some of the main areas regarding the teaching and representation of the Holocaust: the introduction of the literary production of the victims and their descendants into the class of literature, the current turn to the perpetrator experienced in Holocaust fiction and the ethical dilemmas it may bring to the class, and the role of translation in the teaching of the

Resumen

Enmarcado en el campo de la literatura y la traducción, el presente artículo trata de examinar el tema de la educación para la memoria del Holocausto, el cual se ha convertido progresivamente en un aspecto a negociar en el campo de la cultura, la pedagogía y el estudio del Holocausto. Partiendo de una breve reseña sobre la evolución de la representación del Holocausto en las últimas décadas y centrándonos en el contexto de la educación superior actual, este estudio aparece organizado en tres secciones que tratan las principales áreas de debate respecto a la enseñanza y representación del Holocausto: la introducción de la producción literaria de las víctimas y sus descendientes en la clase de literatura, el giro hacia la figura del perpetrador que se ha observado recientemente en las narraciones ficcionales del Holocausto y los dilemas que éste puede

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literature produced by both Holocaust victims and perpetrators. In addressing these questions, some general guidelines on how to teach the and through the Holocaust will be offered; a vital aspect to be negotiated in countries like Spain which, despite not having been directly involved in the Holocaust, must face the responsibility of transmitting this knowledge to the present and future citizens of our globalised world.

Keywords: Holocaust, representation, education, translation, victim, descendant, perpetrator, literature, ethics.

generar en la clase, y el papel de la traducción a la hora de enseñar la literatura creada por las víctimas y perpetradores del Holocausto. Tras analizar estos aspectos, se ofrecerán una serie de pautas generales sobre cómo enseñar el y a través del Holocausto; lo que consideramos de vital importancia en países que, como España, a pesar de no haberse visto implicados directamente en el episodio histórico del Holocausto, deben igualmente asumir la responsabilidad de transmitir este conocimiento a los actuales y futuros ciudadanos de nuestro mundo globalizado.

Palabras clave: Holocausto, representación, educación, traducción, víctima, descendiente, perpetrador, literatura, ética.

The unprecedented nature of the Holocaust has led many thinkers to argue that this event constitutes the greatest break in history and culture to date, what Lifton signals as the universal historical condition of the post-1945 world (1968:479). We might agree or disagree with this statement, but what is true is that seven decades have elapsed since the Nazi machine was set into motion and, although some thinkers like Burg claim that *The Holocaust is Over* (2008), many of the debates concerning its representation and commemoration still resound in our societies. From the initial discussions on the possibility of depicting Nazi horror as art, to the evolution in the artistic approach to the Holocaust, and even to the transformation of the Holocaust into a metaphor to refer to other episodes, many questions keep haunting us. In particular, this article is aimed at addressing the issue of Holocaust education, which has increasingly become a site of negotiation in the fields of Holocaust, literary and pedagogical studies.

Facing the dilemmas that arise when the study of the literary representation of the Holocaust and its teaching interact, this article deals with some of the questions faced by current scholars and educators: What is the link between literature and educating on the Holocaust? Is non-testimonial literature as good a tool as biographical accounts to raise historical awareness? How to give students a balanced perspective on the Holocaust? What is the role of translation and the translator in transmitting the Holocaust? In addressing these and similar questions, this essay supports the claim that the Holocaust is still present in the modern world, and that

even in countries which were not directly affected by it, like Spain, the responsibility of knowledge is associated with fostering Holocaust education.

Adorno's famous contention (1949) that writing poetry after Auschwitz was barbaric reflected the general post world-war view that the most ethical response to the Holocaust was silence, as these events were too atrocious to allow for representation. However, it has generally been misunderstood by those who wanted to justify post-war silence and, beyond that, the ineffability of the Holocaust. Later, in *Negative Dialectics* (1966), Adorno explained that what he meant was that literature needed to find new forms to represent the Holocaust and that suffering should not be silenced, as the victims had the right to voice their experiences. Nevertheless, there has been a current of thinkers and artists, including Jean-François Lyotard, Elie Wiesel, Claude Lanzmann, Arthur Cohen, and others, who continued arguing for its unrepresentability (Rothberg 2000:5, 19).

The works by Primo Levi (1947), Elie Wiesel (1958), Jorge Semprún (1963), and Jean Améry (1966) broke new ground and promoted the genre of testimony as the most appropriate way to access the Holocaust. With them, "the birth of the witness" took place. Holocaust witnesses assumed a kind of "liminal, mediating, semi-sacred role" (Winter 2010:60, 62), linked with their duty "to bear witness for the dead and for the living" (Wiesel 1970:xv). By the 1980s, artistic consciousness had started to develop, as there was "a need not only for perspective, but also for some new orientation" (Appelfeld 1988:91). The Holocaust became more present in US culture with the popular TV series *Holocaust* (1979) and Styron's novel *Sophie's Choice* (1979), made into film in 1982. From that moment onwards, a substantial number of written, oral and visual testimonies of Holocaust survivors were collected, and literature was used by them and their descendants to narrate their experiences.

The second and third generations of Holocaust survivors have produced many fictional or semi-autobiographical books showing their struggles to cope with their inheritance. Works like Epstein's *Children of the Holocaust* (1979), Foer's *Everything Is Illuminated* (2002) or Spiegelman's *Maus: A Survivor's Tale* (Part 1, 1986; Part 2, 1991) illustrate the contradictions between the descendants' desire to forget their families' past and their moral obligation to remember it. As Efraim Sicher argued, the second generation, which "bears the scar without the wound" (1998:27), is impelled to seek understanding and provide some continuity to their families' memories, which explains why "second generation" writers and artists have published artworks, films, novels, and memoirs, or hybrid 'postmemoirs' [. . .], with titles like Hoffman's *After Such Knowledge*, Karpf's *The War After*, Rosenbaum's *Second-Hand Smoke*" (Hirsch 2008:105). In addition, writers who were not directly connected with the Holocaust have contributed to the boom of Holocaust narratives: Thomas Kenneally's *Schindler's List* (1982) and Anne Michaels' *Fugitive Pieces* (1997) are famous examples of Holocaust novels written by non survivors. Also, false testimonies like Helen Darville's *The Hand that Signed the Paper* (1995) and

Benjamin Wilkomirski's *Fragments* (1996) have started to be considered as a different literary genre.

In keeping with this, many critics (Vice 2000; Sicher 2005) have used the label of "Holocaust genre" to refer to the vast quantity of fictional, semi-fictional or autobiographical works representing the Holocaust. It is even possible to speak of Holocaust overrepresentation, which has contributed, nonetheless, to making the historical event accessible to a wider public. Books like Bernard Schlink's *The Reader* (*Der Vorleser*, 1995), John Boyne's *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* (2006), Tatiana De Rosnay's *Sarah's Key* (*Elle s'appelait Sarah*, 2008) and their filmic adaptations have spread Holocaust references all over the world. Unsurprisingly, this almost ubiquity of the Holocaust has led some critics to point to its current status as a metaphor to talk about other traumatic episodes (Craps and Rothberg 2011).

TEACHING THE HOLOCAUST THROUGH THE LITERATURE OF THE VICTIMS AND THEIR DESCENDANTS

There is no denying that the Holocaust has reached the educational sphere and, from the perspective of literary studies, many questions arise and demand consideration. The first would be: Why teaching the Holocaust and texts that represent it? According to the UNESCO, the main goal of teaching the Holocaust should be to launch broader reflections on universal human rights and "to help students comprehend the magnitude and the unprecedented nature of the Holocaust" (Francapane and Haß 2014:13). Also, as Eaglestone and Langford argue in *Teaching Holocaust Literature and Film*, the Holocaust has not only become a major topic of research but it has also turned into a key issue to negotiate in pedagogical circles (2008:1). In relation to this, they claim that the same complexities that emerge when talking about Holocaust representation in Holocaust Studies –"do we?/should we?; silence/speech; history/fiction; literary/non-literary; testimony/fiction; perpetrators/victims; isolating Holocaust studies/locating it in the mainstream; affect/rigour; appropriate/inappropriate; scholarship/respect for the dead or memory" (2008:2)– come to the fore in pedagogy, and they have become part of the vocabulary of historians, philosophers, literary critics and teachers alike. In fact, according to Hirsch and Kacandes, "by teaching the Holocaust one can introduce students to philosophical debates about good and evil; to sociological theories of violence, authority, obedience, conformity, resistance, and rescue; and to psychological theories of tolerance and prejudice, of trauma, memory, and survival" (2004:6-7). Although interest in teaching the Holocaust is significant in many areas, it has particularly affected the literature, film, and media studies curricula, which can provide a good opportunity to pose more sophisticated questions on issues such as representability and the limits of art, or the

intersection of ethics and aesthetics (2004:7). By introducing the Holocaust in literature courses, the students can develop critical skills deemed indispensable for graduates in the Humanities.

On granting the above, another question arises: How can we teach the Holocaust in our literature classes? Analysing the implementation of the Holocaust Memorial Day in Britain, Cesarini concludes that “*taught properly*, the events of 1933-45 remain disturbingly relevant” (2001:54, my emphasis). The emphasis on “*taught properly*” highlights the centrality of the role played by educators. It is a difficult task for the teacher to reduce this historical event to a series of key dates, names and episodes, always trying to be objective. The literature class in particular may become the place where the problematic relationship between the art and history of the Holocaust will unavoidably forge ahead. After the initial emotional impact that the Holocaust causes on the class, there is always a moment when “there must be a more analytical response and engagement with the issues in question. This is clear, as a simple example, in the move from being upset by a Holocaust testimony to thinking about the role of style and focalization in it” (Eaglestone and Langford 2008:4).

Teachers should find mechanisms that allow students to learn and respond to the challenge but “without being utterly devastated or traumatised” (Hirsch and Kacandes 2004:7). According to Hirsch and Kacandes, the three most likely students’ reactions are identification with the victims; interrogation of some of the historical episodes depicted in the texts; and the transformation into “co-witness” of the traumatic events narrated (2004:14-9). Identification is one of the most problematic reactions, as it usually implies an appropriation of the victim’s experience, which is, after all, the strategy used in contemporary popular genres, museums and memorial exhibitions. The most ethical response should be that of empathy, or, to use LaCapra’s phrase, “*empathic unsettlement*” (2001:41).² As to interrogation, students may become more critical during the phase of literary analysis; for instance, they may question the role of international politics during the Holocaust. It is desirable to reach this level of critical thinking, but it is important to remind them that what they have now is a retrospective perspective. Students can also become “co-witnesses”, reflecting on their role as witnesses of others’ testimonies (Felman and Laub 1992:204). Although teachers cannot control students’ responses, they can at least choose texts that are more likely to trigger emphatic reactions, motivating students to know more about this and other genocides and helping them understand that literature can voice historical and political issues.

Additionally, we might think of other criteria, like genre. Testimonies have traditionally been considered the most reliable form of representation, and students

² “Being responsive to the traumatic experience of others, notably of victims, implies not the appropriation of their experience but what I would call empathic unsettlement, which should have stylistic effects” (LaCapra 2001:41).

can be guided into the complexities of testimonial literature in a way that vanquishes their initial reluctance, which may emerge from “the almost sacred aura that accompanies the cultural myth of the survivor” (Stark 2004:201). But other genres can be used. Fiction was initially dismissed on the grounds of lack of authority, reliability and morality, but the inclusion of fiction in our teaching of the Holocaust is generally accepted now, and the debates on whether or not it is appropriate are a good means to introduce students to “the complexities of approaching not only fiction but any genre of representation” (Vice 2000:180-1). In fact, the traditional either/or opposition between viewing literary texts in terms of historical fact or experimental poetic narratives with a knowledge of the events does not help students to grasp the complexity of the Holocaust. What students should grasp is the impossibility to fully comprehend it, whatever form is chosen. Moreover, some current areas of debate refer to the integration of the perspectives of perpetrators and bystanders into the corpus of the “Holocaust genre” and the mediation operated via translation, issues which shall be developed in the next sections of this article.

Considering all these factors, which texts should be chosen? To convey the multifarious dimensions of the Holocaust, a typical course should include a variety of genres, perspectives, genders and nationalities. Hirsch and Kacandes (2004:16) see in a positive light texts like Spiegelman’s *Maus*, Roth’s *The Ghost Writer*, Sebald’s *The Emigrants*, and Yehoshua’s *Mr. Mani*, as well as much poetry, since they make use of distancing devices, experimentation and indirection, which prevent over-identification.³ However, they still manage to expose the reader to extreme situations which might lead students to reflect on their own political, social and ethical positions.

In those cases where educators only want to introduce some representative texts in class, they will have to choose those that fit the structure of their specific syllabus. They can access the great number of resources offered by institutions like the UNESCO, the Holocaust Educational Trust, the Centre for Holocaust Education in London, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, which provide guidelines about how to teach *the* and *through* the Holocaust. It is clear that the teacher’s decision-making process involves a lot of reflection, but this careful selection process is expected to lead to more positive results. In sum, although there are no precise answers to what Holocaust literature should be taught, it seems advisable to follow some of the suggestions proposed to make wiser choices.

Finally, consideration should be given to the fact that each country has dealt with the Holocaust in a different way, depending on their role within this historical episode and their own history. Thus, British and American institutions offer students a great variety of modules on the Holocaust, which is not the case in Spain. Nevertheless, the

³ See Kertzer (2004:250) for an example of a syllabus of a subject on Holocaust representation.

increasing interest in getting a deeper insight into the Holocaust from the educational perspective has reached our country, as shown by the Law of Education passed by the Spanish government in December 2013. According to this new legislation, it is mandatory to teach the Holocaust within the context of universal human rights in all the stages of compulsory education.⁴ As to higher education, the Holocaust as a research and teaching topic has reached the Spanish University, as observed in many Departments of English, Art, History, Politics, etc., where some parts of their programmes are devoted to analysing the Holocaust along with other traumatic episodes. In the case of literary studies, if one browses syllabuses and reading lists more and more texts dealing with the Holocaust will be found. Therefore, and regarding the effects that this gradual introduction into our literature classes may have, it seems reasonable to agree with Hirsch and Kacandes that:

It will be up to our students to sort out these and no doubt other as yet unknown questions about the Holocaust and its legacies. Our courses can at best provide some of the tools they will need if they wish to act as responsible witnesses to the present moment in which they live and to the past they have inherited. (2004:494)

Although teachers should not be charged with excessive responsibility, these words point out that the texts analysed in class can open unfamiliar worlds to the students, worlds that, as current citizens of the world, they are impelled to know.

PERPETRATION IN FOCUS: THE VICTIMS' "OTHERS" AND THE CENTRALITY OF PERPETRATOR FICTION

First presented as a radio lecture in 1966, Adorno's "Education after Auschwitz" opens as follows: "The premier demand upon all education is that Auschwitz not happen again. Its priority before any other requirement is such that I believe I need not and should not justify it" (2003:19). To Adorno, Auschwitz, the Armenian genocide, the dropping of atomic bombs –and more recent examples of calculated mass murder could be added to those mentioned by him– were not anomalous events. They were, rather, expressions of an extremely powerful tendency towards

⁴ According to Article 102 of the LOMCE: "En el currículo de las diferentes etapas de la Educación Básica se tendrá en consideración el aprendizaje de la prevención y resolución pacífica de conflictos en todos los ámbitos de la vida personal, familiar y social, y de los valores que sustentan la democracia y los derechos humanos, que debe incluir en todo caso la prevención de la violencia de género y el estudio del Holocausto judío como hecho histórico" (BOE 2013-12886:97914).

dehumanisation that is an ever-present potentiality within human beings, emboldened under some conditions and repressed in others. How to prevent something like Auschwitz from happening again, then?

Since the possibility of changing the objective –namely societal and political– conditions is extremely limited today, attempts to work against the repetition of Auschwitz are necessarily restricted to the subjective dimension. [...] The roots must be sought in the persecutors, not in the victims who are murdered under the paltriest of pretenses. What is necessary is what I once in this respect called the turn to the subject. One must come to know the mechanisms that render people capable of such deeds, must reveal these mechanisms to them, and strive, by awakening a general awareness of those mechanisms, to prevent people from becoming so again. (2003:20)

This “turn to the subject” mentioned by Adorno is not only a turn to the individual but also, to put it simply, a focus on the perpetrator as an essential aspect which lies within reach of the influence of education. For some time, though, the neglect of the perpetrators and their descendants in Holocaust-related studies was a fact. Thus, in the preface to *Legacy of Silence*, psychologist and behavioural scientist Dan Bar-On explains that when he began his research in 1984 he was surprised by the scarcity of the information he found: The “psychological literature was loaded with research findings and reports about the children, even the grandchildren of survivors. But I could uncover hardly a word about the perpetrators and their children” (1989:9). Almost ten years later Gabriele Rosenthal edited *The Holocaust in Three Generations* (1998). The contributions to this volume show how more and more researchers had begun by that date to explore such issues as the way in which perpetrators’ descendants work through their parents’ past, the extent to which the atrocities committed by the descendants’ fathers have been transmitted to their children, and how these children have started to work through their ancestors’ silence.

Interestingly, as more research has been done on this field in recent years, more fictional literature has been published that approaches the Holocaust and its aftermath in connection with the victims’ “others”. One could mention works like Bernhard Schlink’s *The Reader* (*Der Vorleser*, 1995) and *The Homecoming* (*Die Heimkehr*, 2006); Jonathan Littell’s *The Kindly Ones* (*Les Bienveillantes*, 2006); Martin Amis’s *Time’s Arrow* (1991) and *The Zone of Interest* (2014); Rachel Seiffert’s *The Dark Room* (2001); Uwe Timm’s *In my Brother’s Shadow* (*Am Beispiel meines Bruders*, 2003); Laurent Binet’s *HHhH* (2010); and Jodi Picoult’s *The Storyteller* (2013), among others. This growing interest accounts for the so-called “turn to the perpetrator”, and yet, as Jenni Adams puts it, it cannot be denied that “at the beginning of the twenty first century, the sense of literary and cultural unease which surrounds attempts to conceptualise or depict the Holocaust perpetrator continues” (2013:1). An interesting topic of debate, especially in a class where there is going to be some discussion about perpetrators in literature, is then why they produce this

strange mixture of reluctance and attraction. Bar-On and Kassem argue that many professionals have tended to refrain from doing research on the traumas of perpetrators and their descendants on sensing that such research might point to “psychological symmetry” between victims and victimisers: If both sides were presented as being “psychologically burdened by the Nazi era, this thinking might interfere with the moral superiority that the victim has over the victimizer” (2004:291). Is what Bar-On and Kassem explain about psychological literature also applicable to the field of creative literature? Focusing on the perpetrators seems to bring with it the risk of obscuring or de-emphasising the victim’s perspective, it opens the possibility of problematic identification and other dangers, such as confusing understanding with exculpation. On the other hand, the attention to the figure of the perpetrator might manifest a somewhat sinister fascination, as suggested by Saul Friedländer (1984:19) and even earlier by Susan Sontag in “Fascinating Fascism” (1975).

Another area of debate worth addressing in class has to do with the changing view of the perpetrator. In writing about Holocaust perpetrators, Todorov points out that “we must still grapple with a problematic comparison, between ourselves and the executioners [...]. Those who took an active part in the perpetration of evil were ordinary people, and so are we: they are like us, we are like them” (1997:135). Todorov’s argument is representative of those approaches that have suggested what Bar-On terms “a psychology of ‘ordinary people’” for perpetrators (1989:7). They act as a background to fictional representations that try to depart from a view of the perpetrator as an embodiment of monstrous evil and radical otherness, thus breaking an unwritten taboo that places the perpetrator’s consciousness outside acceptable discourse on the Holocaust (cf. McGlothlin 2009). This willingness to break taboos may have to do with the temporal distance from the Holocaust, as well as with the “ethical turn” in the arts and humanities, but it is also related “unfortunately to the enduring relevance of questions of guilt and complicity in relation to ongoing human-rights abuses and neofascist violence in the contemporary political world” (Adams 2014:252). The focus on the perpetrator brings to the class, then, questions that are all but devoid of interest and urgency.

The issue of the non-radical otherness of the perpetrator can be introduced in the class in tandem with a discussion of Hannah Arendt’s concept of the “banality of evil” as part of a theory she developed after witnessing the Eichmann trial and realising that he was not a monster, but rather “terribly and terrifyingly normal” (1984:257). This brings to mind Gillian Rose’s arguments against claims to Holocaust ineffability, since her views can also throw light on the fear of reckoning with perpetration: “To argue for [...] non-representability is *to mystify something we dare not understand*, because we fear it may be all too understandable, all too continuous with what we are –human, all too human” (1996:43, original emphasis). One must be aware, though, that just as the view of the perpetrator as radically other can be

questioned, so this other approach has its risks. Richard Cronshaw, for instance, warns against overidentification with the perpetrator as something just as unproductive as overidentification with the victim. To further his argument, he resorts to Maria Torgonovick, who critically addresses the fascination with Adolf Eichmann and the willingness to see him as “one of us” in contemporary culture. Cronshaw finds most useful her distinction “between the idea that ‘Eichmann is in all of us’ and that ‘anyone could be Eichmann’”. The former, like the generalised definition of humanity that we shared with him, lacks the contingency of the latter. In fact, that universalization of the potential of perpetration is the means by which the contingent nature of perpetration is overlooked” (2011:78). Beyond the fact that humans are capable of the most inhuman atrocities, there are a number of conditions – psychological, social, historical, political – that must come together in order for one to become a perpetrator. And these must not be overlooked, either, when dealing with the subject.

Perpetrator literature puts the reader in an uncomfortable position and this may be addressed by discussing issues like those referred to in the paragraph above. But the difficulty of the subject should not deter educators from confronting it. As Froma Zeitlin remarks in reflecting on the first time she taught the Holocaust in a department of comparative literature: “How can any course that focuses on the Holocaust, whatever the context or field of study, not confront the issue of the perpetrators? They are at the core, after all, of the entire catastrophe” (2004:69). The Holocaust can and should be taught with a multi-perspective approach, and so, two further issues can be introduced in the courses. The first has to do with the plight of perpetrators’ descendants and the other with the figure of the ordinary German.

A good resource to debate the issue of perpetrators’ descendants is the documentary film *Hitler’s Children* (Ze’evi 2011), which reveals the ways in which family members of high-rank senior Nazi officers from Hitler’s inner circle struggle with the burden of their forebears’ identity. Relatives of such figures as Goering, Himmler, and Hoess among others, share their feelings of guilt, responsibility, anger, that are part of their daily lives.⁵ Their testimonies do not leave anyone indifferent. In the same line, and also worth mentioning, is *My Father’s Keeper: Children of Nazi Leaders* (2001). Its author, Stephan Lebert, inherited the manuscripts that his father had written –profiles of Nazi children– in the late 1950s. Lebert re-interviewed many of them, the resulting book being the combination of the father’s and the son’s work.

Once the plight of perpetrators’ descendants has been dealt with, the way is paved to broaden the focus and consider how ordinary Germans were and are affected by the Holocaust. In 2006, Zeitlin focused on an emerging trend in Holocaust

⁵ Introduction and trailer: <http://www.hitlerschildren.com/>. Full documentary: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5K_OL-nY5JA

literature, which she called “imaginary tales in the land of the perpetrators”: Fictional stories that move away from the victims and deal instead with the victimisers, as well as with the legacy of the Nazi period on ordinary Germans. Interestingly, these narratives recreate the day-to-day workings of society in the lives of “ordinary folk” under the Third Reich or some time later in order to probe, from this perspective:

[t]he all-consuming question that seems to haunt us still: how could it have happened? What did ordinary Germans think and do during this period, when certain classes of persons, especially, but not only, Jews, were progressively made social pariahs, disenfranchised, stigmatized and finally outlawed? How did an apparently normal and diversified society assent to Nazi measures of increasing violence [...]? What did these ordinary folk know? And what did they care? (2006:215)

Zeitlin thus argues that novels like the ones discussed in her article⁶ provide another perspective from which to try and answer these questions. This section could be closed by bringing to consideration the possibility that there is no answer. And the acceptance that there is no answer also has implications when it comes to the artistic representation of the Holocaust in general and the perpetrators in particular. Consider, for instance, the following passage from a review of Martin Amis’s latest novel, *The Zone of Interest*, which falls within the field of perpetrator fiction as was the case with *Time’s Arrow*:

Amis’s project comes with a serious caveat: in his afterword, he describes his previous failed attempts to get anywhere with the Holocaust; despite reading yards of books and amassing plenty of knowledge, “I gained nothing at all in penetration.”

It was only when he came across a piece of writing by Primo Levi –a small-print addendum to a companion volume to *If This Is a Man*– in which Levi argued that we should place the thoughts and the actions of the Nazis beyond comprehension, to mark them as “nonhuman” or even “counterhuman”, that Amis began to feel artistically liberated. As he told Ron Rosenbaum [...] in a 2012 interview [...] “as soon as the pressure to understand” left him, he was able to write. (Clark 2014)

This section began by referring to Adorno’s “Education after Auschwitz”, which closes with a hopeful remark: “Education and enlightenment can still manage a little something” (2003:33). It ends with a writer who acknowledges, fifty years after Adorno said so, that he has tried to understand and has actually amassed a lot of knowledge, but has gained no insight, no penetration. Thus, he focuses on another duty, the duty not to understand, as conducive to artistic freedom. But almost like Samuel Beckett and his “obligation” to continue speaking despite the fact that there is no need to express and nothing to express, there seems to be an “obligation” to

⁶ Marcie Hershman’s *Tales of the Master Race* (1991), Gila Lustiger’s *The Inventory* (*Die Bestandsaufnahme*, 1995), and Rachel Seiffert’s *The Dark Room* (2001).

address not only the Holocaust in general but also perpetration in particular, and to take up the challenge this amounts to in the educational context despite the fact that understanding may not be the reward awaiting us at the end of the journey. To believe, with Adorno, that we can get “a little something” will have to be enough.

APPROACHING THE HOLOCAUST THROUGH TRANSLATION

The links between Holocaust and translation studies will be now explored, giving special consideration to the way in which the meaning of the Nazi genocide has been reshaped through translation and to the complexities that such a rewriting practice triggers in relation to how we understand the Holocaust and how we educate about it. Our premise is that the academic interdiscipline known as translation studies contributes to gaining new insight of the historical event in a two-dimensional manner: First, by providing a theoretical framework that helps to open up the analysis of Holocaust-related cultural production and, second, by putting the limelight on the mediation of Holocaust memory operated via the act of translation.

On a theoretical level, the inter-relationships that underlie the conceptual framework of Holocaust studies and translation studies show that the actual practice of translation is close in its conceptualisation to the problematic surrounding Holocaust representation. The most outstanding of these complex matters is related to the concept of “gap”, understood as lacuna, absence or void. Inasmuch as the distance between the two languages involved in translation separates the source and target texts in terms of time, space and culture, a gap emerges, precipitating “translation loss” (Harvey and Higgins 1992:24). For its part, the historical reality of the Holocaust is punctuated by discontinuities that have prompted certain victims (Wiesel 1990) as well as scholars (Lyotard 1988) to argue that the gap between what happened and what may be known about those facts can never be fully bridged. As for the particular way in which translation may have influenced the commemoration of the Holocaust, it is necessary to call attention to one obvious –though largely neglected– factor: “For many readers, including professional historians, Holocaust memoirs are available only in translation” (Kuhiwczak 2011:284). That is to say, the testimonies of the event and, in turn, the lessons that are drawn from the narratives of both victims and perpetrators are highly dependent on translation. Such dependency suggests that the meaning of the Holocaust has been modelled through a shaping force other than the one resulting from the sum of the facts themselves.

Given the centrality of the theory and practice of translation for Holocaust understanding, the specific role of translation in the commemoration of the Nazi

crimes should start to be considered as a crucial issue when teaching this historical event. In particular, this section seeks to highlight the importance of translation in unveiling the way in which the representations produced by Holocaust victims and perpetrators are influenced by commemoration policies in the countries of the source and target texts respectively. Translation has contributed to universalizing the meaning of the Holocaust and to strengthening a narrative according to which the Second World War was a morally clear-cut conflict between Good (the Allies) and Evil (Hitler and the Nazis). In more general terms, it has fostered an approach which understands the historical event not only as a Jewish catastrophe but as a breakdown of civilization in modernity (Levy and Sznajder 2006:7). The ultimate goal of bringing such trend to the forefront is to raise students' awareness about ideological interventions in the text and to make them reflect on the ethical implications enmeshed in them.

There are two main senses in which translation may contribute positively to the commemoration of the Nazi genocide. First, translation, which in its strict etymological sense means "carrying over", allows texts gaining a wide readership or, in other words, it enables them to be known at an international scale. That is to say, it has the capacity to ensure broadcast coverage of Holocaust memory by making source material on the historical event available beyond the geographical boundaries where it occurred and the lifetime of the person who recounts the story. In this way and regardless of the degree of manipulation, some meaning is transferred, so that there is an extent to which the meaningless horror of the concentration camp system is unveiled in the process. Second, translation, which Walter Benjamin (1923) described as having (after) life-giving qualities because it empowered translated texts to go on living, can prompt a form of collective remembrance of the victims or, put otherwise, a symbolic resurrection of the dead. Considering that we are dealing with translations about such a death-causing event as the Holocaust, the metaphor is highly significant; indeed, it confronts the problem originating in an event which the Nazis predicted would not be written because there would be nobody left to testify. It is in these two senses, mainly, in which translation can be seen as a powerful mechanism to reverse the destiny of oblivion that Hitler had planned for his victims.

Inasmuch as the practice of translation involves first and foremost interpretation work, it is an endless process of reshaping, retelling and reworking; or, using the term coined by Lefevere (1992), of rewriting. Commenting on the intricacies related to such a process, Bassnett and Lefevere highlight that the act of rewriting may be used to "introduce new concepts, new genres, new devices" though it may, in its negative side, be undertaken to make the source text meet certain ends in the target culture (1995:vii). Translation is certainly a primary method of imposing meanings about cultural realities, historical facts or living groups and, more shockingly, it has the capacity of imposing such meanings as legitimate. Put bluntly, translation opens the path to manipulating narratives. It can thus foster acculturation processes, conceal

power relations and trigger partial amnesia. Raising awareness about such manipulative processes is vital when dealing with the translation of Holocaust texts, for ethics demands that the representation of such crime be as faithful as possible to the facts and conditions of the historical event.

However, the dependence of Holocaust narratives on translation raises troublesome concerns in relation to the interventions which may come along with the act of rewriting and to the manner in which manipulative processes have to be dealt with from a pedagogical perspective. Among the major issues that need to be considered, it is possible to include the following: What shape has the Holocaust, as a discourse, adopted through translation? Is the factuality of the events occurred in Nazi-occupied Europe faithfully reproduced when they are rewritten? Are translations affected by the contexts in which they are published? How is it possible to ensure that the ideology of the translator does not influence his/her interpretation of events? Is there a vested interest in downplaying the fact that the vast majority of Holocaust literature is read in translation?

In order to answer these questions, it is best to analyse the texts themselves and their responses, for which two survivor testimonies have been chosen, Elie Wiesel's *La nuit* and the translation into English of Anne Frank's *Diary (Het Achterhuis. Dagbrieven van 14 juni 1942 tot 1 augustus 1944)*, as well as two texts written by perpetrators: the English translations of Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf* and the Dutch translation of Rudolf Hoess' autobiography, *Kommandant in Auschwitz. Zelfpotret van een beul*. All four texts are interesting from a pedagogical point of view in that they promote a multifaceted understanding of the intellectual and psychological complexities brought to the fore by research into the lives of both victims and perpetrators. As to the particular ways in which the examination into the translation strategies used in these texts may enhance the teaching and learning process and contribute to a greater awareness of the Holocaust, the analysis should help students to develop a more profound appreciation of how ideology affects the construction of national and international collective histories.

In a controversial essay entitled "Elie Wiesel and the Scandal of Jewish Rage", Naomi Seidman offers a theological-political analysis of Wiesel's revisions to the French translation of his Yiddish memoir, *Un die welt hot geshvign (And the world kept silent)*, arguing that charged Jewish-Christian relationships and Western politics played a major role in the final published version of the text. Seidman uses a series of examples to illustrate that the process involved transforming the structure of the manuscript to purge and sanitise Wiesel's complaints and vengeful attitude towards the passivity of the Western world, which were now directed not against man but against God. Among the examples that Seidman provides to show the way in which Jewish rage was sublimated, the following one, which entailed the elimination from the French version of a passage in which Elie was particularly harsh on bystanders, is highly illustrative:

But –now, ten years after Buchenwald, I see that the world is forgetting. Germany is a sovereign state, the German army has been reborn. The bestial sadist of Buchenwald, Ilsa Koch, is happily raising her children. War criminals stroll in the streets of Hamburg and Munich. The past has been erased. Forgotten. Germans and anti-Semites persuade the world that the story of the six million Jewish martyrs is a fantasy, and the naive world will probably believe them, if not today, then tomorrow or the next day. (qtd. by Seidman 1996:244-45)

The translation into English of Anne Frank's experiences hiding during the German occupation of the Netherlands is believed to be at the root of the Holocaust's Americanisation and subsequent universalisation. According to David Bathrick (2005:138-9), Anne's father, who introduced significant changes into the Dutch edition, was responsible for undertaking the first steps in the narrative appropriation of the story. In addition to expurgating Anne's highly critical description of her mother and her references to sexuality, Otto Frank de-Judaised the diary by omitting all mentions to anti-German sentiments, a series of operations which contributed to snapping readers out of their prior passivity towards the Holocaust and to creating international appetite for this body of literature. Further steps in this universalising trend, adds Bathrick, were ensured by the "ongoing process of rewriting, re-reading, and remediating" to which the diary was subject from the very moment in which it was edited (2005:139). As a matter of fact, by the time the text arrived to the United States, it was not a story of Jewish suffering but rather a story of human suffering in general –a universalist perspective that the American edition continued to exploit.

As for the translation of perpetrator testimonies, it is possible to find examples where the texts are subject to processes of mediation which are no less manipulative than the ones described for survivor memoirs. In an attempt at creating distance from rampant militarism, in general, and from Nazism, in particular, translated discourse has contributed to projecting an image of the perpetrators which is more demonising than the one pictured in the original text; creating, hence, a tactical difference that seeks to define its initiators (notably in the case of Allied members) in opposition to the idea of radical evil. The translation into Dutch of the autobiography of Rudolf Höess, the Nazi commander of the Auschwitz extermination camp, is a point in case. The translator, Willy Wielek-Berg, departs from Höess' original text by standing away from an ideology that led to the murder of eleven million people. In relation to this, Christiane Stallaert notes that the translator of Höess' autobiography overtly expresses her disgust towards the author of the text by choosing to translate the subtitle as follows: "Autobiography of an Executioner", which, as Stallaert points out, is a most unlikely formula to be used by someone who has decided to relate his life story (*n.d.*:369). In the preface, the translator even declares her disgust for the content translated; she claims that the text is untranslatable because there is linguistic incompatibility between the Dutch language and Nazi German.

The translations of Hitler's autobiographical manifesto *Mein Kampf*, where the Nazi leader outlined his political ideology and future plans for Germany, are also telling in this sense, as proved by Stefan Baumbarten's study of the English translation, "Uncovering Ideology in Translation". Combining a sociohistorical and linguistic analysis, Baumgarten focuses in particular on two of the existing translations of the text: James Murphy's and Ralph Manheim's translation proposals, published in 1939 and 1943 respectively. Interestingly, the study reveals that whereas Murphy's work was openly favourable to the Nazi cause, as shown in the preface where the translator praises Nazi "achievements" and in the stylistic improvements introduced to the text, Manheim's translation, which was the first to be authorised in England, emphasised the mediocrity of Hitler's style and his derogatory language in an attempt to demonise the Nazi programme (2001:36-8).

Although the analysis presented here is limited in its scope, the four examples reveal interesting patterns from a pedagogical perspective. First and foremost, the study of the manipulative practices imposed on Holocaust texts through translation unveils the need for Holocaust education to pay attention to the image that is created through translation, which in some cases has contributed to intensifying the essential difference between the Allies and the Nazis. In that sense, certain translation practices can be said to have championed a clear-cut contrast between a positive self-conception of the narrating persona (Good) and the negative image of the other (Evil), which, in turn, has served to revalidate the image of the Allies as the goodies fighting against totalitarianism (the baddies). Further, another tendency observed is the attempt to de-Judaise the Holocaust so as to emphasise that there were other victims apart from the Jews and to portray the event as a universal event from which all humanity must learn.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Taking into account the various dimensions that configure the challenges encountered when introducing the Holocaust into our diverse educational spheres, what may be concluded is that the future of the Holocaust will be inextricably linked to education whether we focus on the creation of some general guidelines that may help us approach the literary representations by Holocaust victims and their descendants, whether we are willing to include the perpetrator's and bystander's visions into our teaching and learning about the Holocaust, or whether translation becomes an invigorated powerful site to negotiate the history and the memory of the Holocaust. Together with some of the questions that have tried to be answered along this article, many other dilemmas will have to be confronted on this path towards the

inclusion of the Holocaust in our educational contexts. Enquiries concerning the authorship of Holocaust narratives and questions about our role as teachers and literary critics dealing with these texts will continue to be addressed in the public sphere.

Thus, drawing on Bauer's claim that Holocaust education should be part of the modern societies' "general attempt to create a world that will not be 'good', but possibly slightly better than the one we live in now" (2014:181), we could argue that the future of Holocaust Studies lies to a great extent in education. To quote Michael S. Roth's words:

Teachers are in a privileged position to help others recognise the ways in which we all fail to see, pay attention to, and connect with the experiences of others. [...] In so doing, we can teach our students to become teachers of themselves and others, and to become citizens eager to understand those around them as they understand themselves. Although this is not the only kind of understanding that can be produced in the classroom, it is a crucial one for citizens in a democracy. (2006:233)

This line of thought does not only support the crucial role of teachers in educating the future generations on the democratic and citizenship values that failed drastically in Europe seven decades ago, but it also endorses a view of the humanities, art and literature, as a powerful sphere where the ideologies and values that sustain our societies are continuously (re)defined and (re)constructed. As the philosopher Martha Nussbaum has put it, if education is to make a key contribution to the construction of a democratic society it "must give a central role in the curriculum to the humanities and the arts, cultivating a participatory type of education that activates and refines the capacity to see the world through another person's eyes" (2010:96). And this is what the diverse texts presented in this article are aimed at: they provide a site of encounter for the readers/students to develop those empathic bonds which may allow them to see the Holocaust through the victims', descendants', bystanders or even perpetrators' eyes.

In conclusion, even though it is very difficult to gain full insight into the Holocaust and the multifarious perspectives from which to approach it, literature and education can work together to illuminate the future generations' path in coming to terms with one of the darkest episodes of our era and in creating a democratic society where episodes like this one will never happen again.

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